

# IOWA BIRD LIFE



Vol. XLII No. 4

Dec. 1972

Published by the

**IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION**

## CONTENTS

LURE OF THE LIST .....	87-88
"WHAT IS IT" BIRD .....	88-90
BIRDING AREAS OF IOWA .....	91-95
FIELD REPORTS .....	96-97
GENERAL NOTES .....	98-101
BOOK REVIEWS .....	101-102
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION .....	103-104

---

### OFFICERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

President - John Osness, 320 Columbia Circle, Waterloo, Iowa 50701  
 Vice President - Jim Rod, 1508 Kellogg St., Ames, Iowa 50010  
 Secretary - Mrs. Mary Lou Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803  
 Treasurer - Miss Antoinette Camarata, 1420 Patton Ave., Waterloo, Iowa 50702  
 Editor - Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803  
 Librarian - Mrs. Beryl Layton, 1560 Linmar Drive, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404  
 Executive Council:  
     Beryl Layton, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
     Keith Layton, Oskaloosa, Iowa  
     Mrs. Charles Ayres, Ottumwa, Iowa  
     Robert Nickolson, Sioux City, Iowa

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publication of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; THE BULLETIN 1929-1930; IOWA BIRD LIFE beginning 1931.

---

**SUBSCRIPTION RATE:** \$4.00 a year, single copies \$1.00 each except where supply is limited to five or fewer copies, \$1.25. Subscriptions to the magazine is included in all paid memberships, of which there are five classes as follows: Life Member, \$100.00, payable in four equal installments; Contributing Member, \$10.00 a year; Supporting Member, \$5.00 a year; Regular Member, \$4.00 a year; Junior Member (under 16 years of age), \$1.00 a year.

---

### EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE

235 McCLELLAN BLVD.  
 DAVENPORT, IOWA 52803

Published quarterly by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union at 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa. 52803. Second class postage paid at Davenport, Iowa. Subscription \$4.00, single copies \$1.00.

## The Lure of the List

Part 2

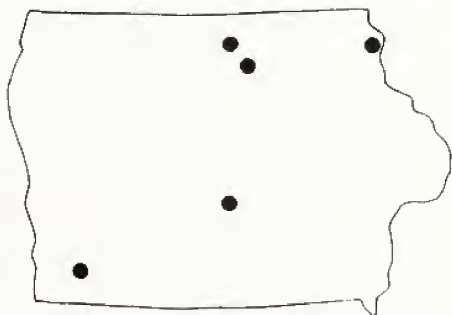
WOODWARD H. BROWN

432 Tonawanda Dr.

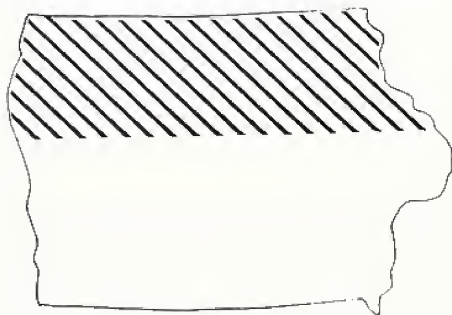
DES MOINES

### RED-NECKED GREBE

While the principal breeding grounds of this "rare migrant" are in the northwest, most of the 10 recent Iowa records are from the eastern or central parts of the state; a 1951 sighting at Shenandoah being the exception. Recent observations have been in spring and early summer. 1964, W. Twin Lake, Hancock Co.; 1965, Union Slough, Kossuth Co.; 1966, Harpers Ferry, Allamakee Co.; 1955, Des Moines.



RED-NECKED GREBE



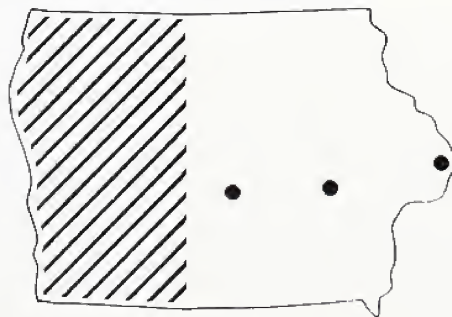
WESTERN GREBE

### WESTERN GREBE

This grebe has been seen rather regularly in recent years throughout the northern half of the state, with observations about equally divided between the spring and fall months.

### CINNAMON TEAL

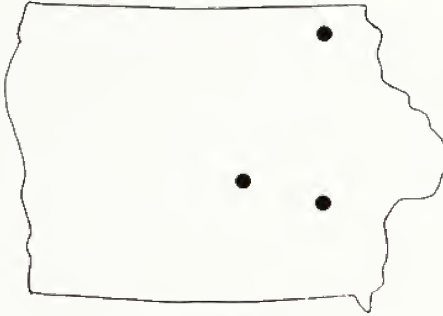
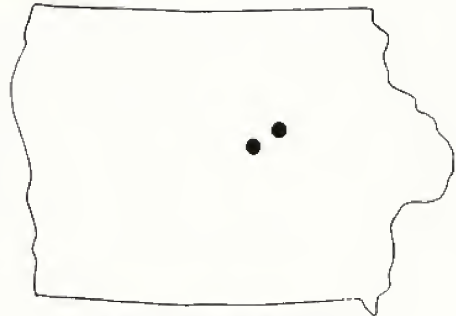
Observations of this western duck have been in the spring with few exceptions and from the western part of the state with a 1967 record from Wheatland, Clinton Co., and a 1972 record from Swan Lake in Johnson Co.



CINNAMON TEAL

**WHIMBREL**

A migrant along both coasts, but practically all Iowa records are from the eastern half of the state and in the spring. 1964, Decorah, Winnishiek Co.; 1965 Conesville, Muscatine Co.; 1968, Rock Creek Lake, Jasper Co.

**WHIMBREL****PRAIRIE WARBLER****PRAIRIE WARBLER**

There are but two recent records of this southern warbler, both for April, 1954 Grundy Center and 1960 Cedar Falls.

## Have You Ever Seen A "What Is It" Bird?

ARTHUR L. CARPENTER  
36856 Thinbark Rd.  
WAYNE, MICHIGAN

Have you ever seen a bird that is mostly white with a splash of red and edged with grey on the side and belly and with a grey patch mixed with rust on the back between the shoulders? And with quite a long greyish, white tipped, notched tail?

Such a bird was described to Mrs. Lloyd Hewitt of Jesup on August 7, 1972 by a friend who saw a bird of this description in her back yard sunflower patch. Mrs. Hewitt excitedly dashed over to her friend's house only to find no bird of such a description. Over a cup of coffee more details were revealed. Peterson and Robins' books were consulted but no such bird could be found. The friend persisted that she had really seen such a bird, "right out there eating my sunflowers". She gasped, "there it is again!" Wonder, amazement, and disbelief, but there it was. Mrs. Hewitt said "is that a crossed bill on the bird?" Closer scrutiny through the binoculars did reveal a crossed bill on this most amazing bird. Then a quick look around the sunflower patch revealed that a female Red Crossbill with four juveniles was also in the patch. Continued observation suggested that this was a family of crossbills and the partial albino was the male.





PARTIAL ALBINO RED CROSSBILL

Photo by author

We arrived at Hewitt's about 9:30 the morning of August 8th and she excitedly related the story of the albino Red Crossbill. "Imagine crossbills in Iowa on August 7th and an albino with them, that has to be a record." After visiting all of the sunflower patches in Jesup and not finding a crossbill any place, a slight question arose in my mind as to whether or not I would ever see this rare creature. I thought, "Oh well just another gone bird to add to my life list." My life list of unusual birds I have been told about but never been able to find must be the longest gone bird list in the world. Yes, if I could only photograph all of these rare and unusual gone birds I have been told about I would surely be world famous, just like a character out of a Dr. Seuss book.

After a day of picnicking and birding along Crane Creek and the Wapsi we tiredly drove back to Jesup. I asked as we entered town, "Do you suppose the albino Red Crossbill has returned or do you think he left town when he knew I was coming?" A survey of the sunflower patches revealed almost nothing. In fact, it not only looked like the crossbills left town but that all other birds did also. A survey of the last sunflower patch revealed nothing. As I started to drive away in the truck with a sad, whipped dog feeling, Mrs. Hewitt exclaimed, "Wait, I think I saw a movement". All binoculars were raised and the patch was scanned again and again but without success. Mrs. Hewitt stated she still felt that there was a bird out there so she got out and walked along a line fence, searching the sunflower heads and then she motioned for us to come. Sure enough there it was! A live, albino Red Crossbill. It reminded one of a parakeet the way it clambered around on the sunflower heads eating the seeds. I tried taking some pictures but as you might guess by then it was cloudy and late in the afternoon. The sun did peek through the clouds just before it sank behind a garage, so the pictures were all under exposed.

Upon our return home I wrote Dr. Harrison Tordoff, Director of the Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota about the frequency of albinism in crossbills. Dr. Tordoff has studied crossbills for many years and is an expert on them. His reply stated he had never seen an albino, although he has examined over 4,000 museum specimens and many, many live birds. Well that did make me feel good. I really did see and photograph an exotic, fancy bird. Now to erase one from my voluminous gone bird life list and add it to my, much shorter, actually seen life list. That really had to be a dream come true thanks to Clarice Hewitt and her neighbors with their backyard sunflower patches.

#### **Selected Bibliography on Red Crossbills and Albinism**

Ross, C. Chandler. Albinism Among North American Birds, Cassinia. Philadelphia. No. XLVII, 1963, pp. 2-22.

Tordoff, Harrison B. Notes On Plumages, Molts, and Age Variation Of The Red Crossbill, *The Condor*. Vol. 54, No. 4, July-August, 1952, pp. 200-203.

Further Notes on Plumages and Molts of Red Crossbills, *The Condor*. Vol. 56, No. 2, March-April, 1954, pp. 108-109.

Social Organization and Behavior in a Flock of Captive Non-Breeding Red Crossbills, *The Condor*. Vol. 56, 1954, pp. 346-358.

Tordoff, Harrison B. and William R. Dawson. The Influence of Daylength on Reproductive Timing in the Red Crossbill, *The Condor*. Vol. 67, 1965, pp. 416-422.

Dawson, William R. and Harrison B. Tordoff. Relation of Oxygen Consumption to Temperature in the Red and White-Winged Crossbills, *The Auk*. Vol. 81, 1964, pp. 26-35.

Dawson, William R., V. H. Shoemaker, H. B. Tordoff, and A. Borut. Observations on the Metabolism of Sodium Chloride in the Red Crossbill, *The Auk*. Vol. 82, 1965, pp. 606-623.

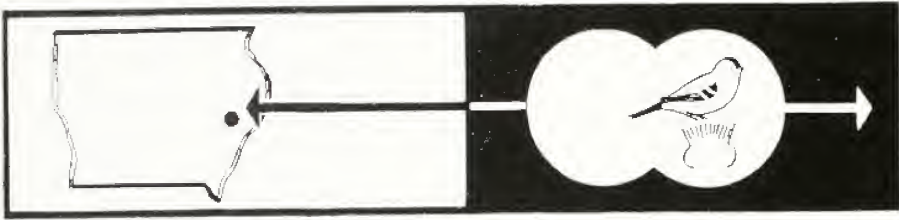
## **Dues are Due**

You can help the Union and our treasurer by sending your dues now to:

Miss Antoinette Camarata, Treas.

1410 Patton Ave.

Waterloo, Iowa 50702



## Birding Areas of Iowa

### Clinton and Southern Jackson Counties with adjacent Illinois Areas

PETER C. PETERSEN  
235 McClellan Blvd.  
DAVENPORT

Clinton 1970 population: 34,719

Average annual precipitation: 34.61 inches

Normal mean annual temperature average: 48 degrees

Area covered by this report: about 700 sq. miles

Sixteen year average Christmas Census record (Clinton) - 54.

#### Introduction

The Clinton County area provides a varied array of habitat and, as one would expect, attracts a large number of birds. Along the Mississippi one finds networks of wooded islands in the Jackson County portion of this area around Sabula and a nearly three mile wide open area just above Lock 13 to the south. Beaver Island lies between Clinton and Camanche and provides another heavily wooded but hard to cover area. The variety of the mouth of the Wapsipinicon is similar to the Sabula area. The lower reaches of the Wapsipinicon provide extensive stretches of bottomland woods and fine canoeing areas. One good access point is Sherman Park near Calamus. The remainder of the county is rolling with woodlots and creek-bottoms providing much timber.

Many birders from other areas come to the Mississippi River sections frequently but not many birders reside within the area. Miss Esther Copp of Wheatland has undoubtedly spent more time birding in Clinton County than anyone else. As mentioned in the section on Davenport and Scott County this article will deal with adjacent territory in Illinois, chiefly Carroll and Whiteside County areas along the Mississippi.

#### River Bottoms

**Sabula Causeway.** The flooded bottomland area north of Sabula is bisected by the highway 52 roadbed. This area is best covered by boat but one can park at the toll house area near the Mississippi River bridge and see birds from along the highway causeway. If one drives slowly along the highway birds can be seen and



heard along the way during all seasons. This causeway has twice produced Myrtle Warblers on Christmas counts and the wealth of cover probably conceals other unexpected vagrants in other seasons. North of the Mississippi River bridge is a heronry of Great Blue Herons and Common Egrets. A gravel road, better adapted to birding, leaves highway 52 on the west side just south of the small bridge near Sabula. A cemetery located along this road can be productive in the winter.

**Wapsi Wildlife Area.** This Clinton County Conservation Area is reached by traveling northeast from Folletts about one mile and turning east on a gravel road just past a quarry. The road leads into the area which is being developed as a park. It provides a launching point for exploration of the mouth of the Wapsipinicon. Some hiking can be done, especially in winter. All the typical bottomland birds are found in this area. The mouth of the Wapsipinicon is an easy place in which to get lost and one should be careful to avoid this pitfall, especially when traveling by boat.

**Meredosia Slough.** This fine area is located in Illinois along highway 84 about two miles south of Albany. Access is not easy but birds can often be seen from parking areas along the highway. A small marshy area near the pumping station is worth checking. At one time the Mississippi flowed east at this point and a vast sandy plain extends to the Rock River, a distance of about fifteen miles. This is often productive in spring when heavy rains attract waterfowl and shorebirds. Many pines have been planted and can be productive during the winter. Just south of this area is the nuclear Cordova Generating Station, a location which is becoming a concentration point for wintering gulls and eagles.

#### **Upland Areas.**

**Eagle Point Park.** This city park located on the north edge of Clinton just east of highway 67 commands a beautiful view of Lock 13 and the Mississippi at a point where it is three miles wide. The bluff tops provide a fine vantage point for the observation of tree-top migrants at eye-level or below. Scattered conifer plantings attract avian winter visitors but one can enter the park only on foot in the winter. This unlikely easterly location was the site of the first Townsend Solitaire observation for Iowa. The railroad tracks below the bluffs have a dense vegetative cover along their edge providing good cover for migrants and residents such as the Carolina Wren. Multiflora rose hedges edge the parks upper areas providing yet another habitat. On occasion one can spot flocks of ducks from the park and get closer by going to Lock 13 from the Illinois side of the river.

**Maquoketa Caves State Park.** This fine upland wooded area is located about seven miles northwest of Maquoketa along the south fork of the Maquoketa River. Hiking trails lead through the woodland and provide good access to the migrants and breeders. Camping is permitted and a June weekend camping trip presents the opportunity to study many upland breeding species. A small nearby area is Blackhawk Wildlife area, a county park located along the same river. It is reached by driving three miles west of Maquoketa, on highway 64, then north two miles on a gravel road. It provides boat launching facilities and additional access to the river bluff.

**Spring Valley.** This creek valley rises from the Mississippi flood plain northeast of Fulton, Illinois. It is reached by driving north from Fulton on highway 84 to blacktop county road marked by a sign for Spring Valley Church, turning east and driving to the bluff. Turn north of a gravel road and travel about a mile and a half to the first road going right. This is the valley and the next two miles is the home



range of a flock of Wild Turkeys. These introduced wild trapped turkeys have been re-established here since the late 1950's. Winter is the best season to see the turkeys as they tend to stay together and stand out against snow. They have become progressively more wary over the years since their introduction. The bluff road one takes to reach Spring Valley can be followed north to explore some rugged country with many cedar thickets and heavy timber.

**Mississippi Palisades State Park.** This beautiful park lies along the bluff of the Mississippi River just north of Savanna, Illinois, along highway 84. It comprises 1,560 acres and includes fifteen miles of hiking trails which are good for birding at all seasons but especially during migratory periods. Campgrounds are sprinkled liberally throughout the park and a small interpretive center-museum is well worth a visit. The park is heavily used, especially during the summer. The bluff of the river is about 250 feet high at this point and the view from the top of the wooded area in Iowa described previously under Sabula Causeway is well worth the climb.

**Goose Lake.** This 900 acre state upland marsh area is excellent for waterfowl in spring. Hunting is permitted in fall so birding drops off sharply. The area is located just west of Goose Lake, Iowa on highway 136. The common breeding marsh species can usually be located but hipboots or a canoe help.

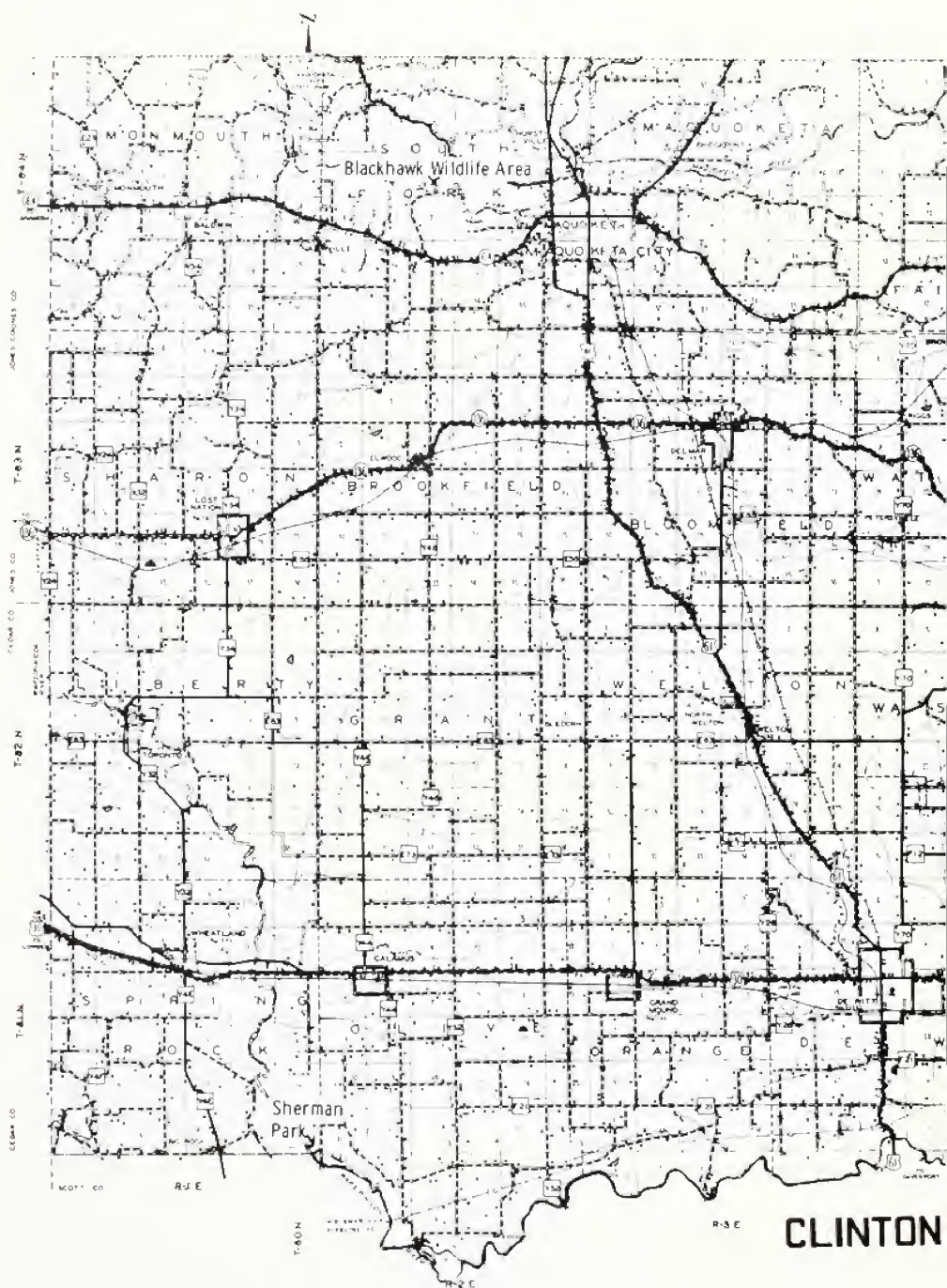
#### **River Areas**

**Lock 13.** Located west of highway 84 about three miles north of Fulton, Illinois, this lock lets one drive to a point near the center of the Mississippi where it is about three miles wide. A telescope is a must here and good birding is in store throughout the year. Almost all waterfowl can be found here including loons, all grebes, White Pelicans, Whistling Swans, geese, all ducks, especially divers, eagles, gulls, terns, and Snow Buntings. A heronry composed of Great Blue Herons and Common Egrets is located about one half mile below the lockmasters home on the Illinois side of the river. A marshy area south of the roadway near the locks themselves often holds Killdeer and Common Snipe in the winter.

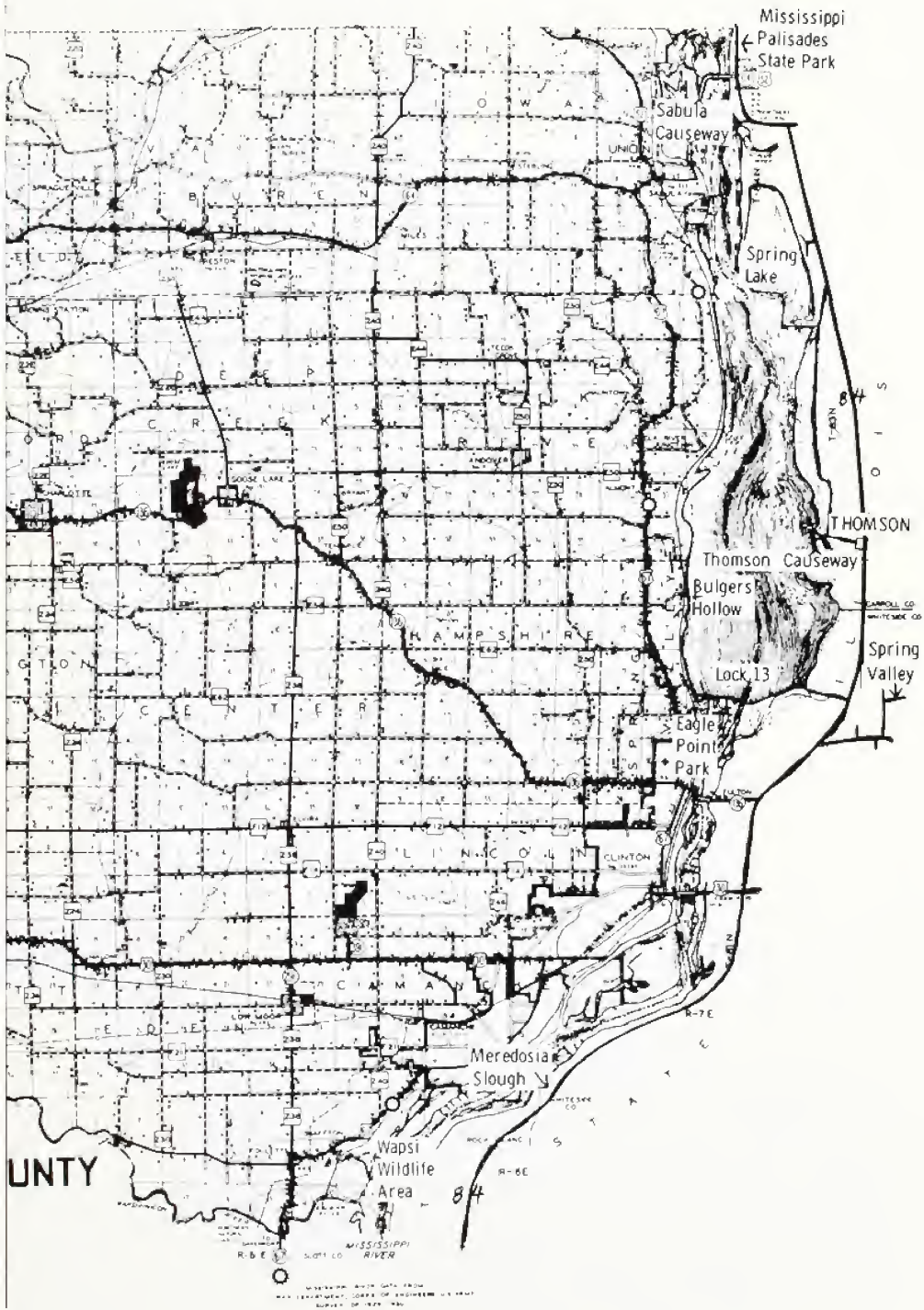
**Thomson Causeway.** This is a Corps of Engineers Recreation Area located west of Thomson, Illinois, along the Mississippi River. It provides good access to the river and is opposite one of the last breeding colonies of Double-crested Cormorants on the river. Ducks are often common along the roads in this area in the spring. Just north of this spot is a nice small marsh.

**Big Slough (Spring Lake).** Another Corps of Engineers area is the Big Slough boat launching area located about four miles north of Thomson, Illinois, west of highway 84. It provides access to Spring Lake, a partly diked area of Mississippi backwater. It is excellent for waterfowl during migration. In addition to the Big Slough location the gravel road going north of this spot provides many vantage points. One of the most noteworthy attractions are flocks of geese and Whistling Swans, usually seen in March and November. Shorebirds can be found here in excellent numbers when the water level is low enough. On one occasion nineteen species were seen in August.

**Camanche.** This river community has a rather unique attraction, a duck "feeder". Operated during the winter by people living along a "chute" of the Mississippi on the south edge of Camanche it attracts many ducks. Mallards predominate but Black Ducks and other puddle ducks can usually be found. Some divers and an occasional Pied-billed Grebe have been seen in January.

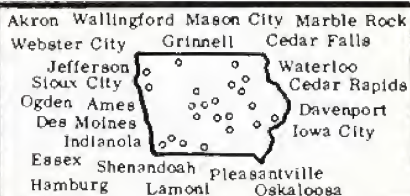








## FIELD REPORTS



## Fall, 1972

The weather this fall has hardly been conducive to bird watching; abnormal rains starting back in July and continuing filled lakes and ponds and eliminated mudflats attractive to waders. The rainy season culminated in a blizzard on 13 November which deposited heavy snow over the state. While the warblers might not have been influenced by the local weather, there appear to have been few seen. Sparrow, other than White-throated, have been few and late, and ducks also seem to have been late in arriving.

**Loons, Grebes, Pelicans, Cormorants.** Common Loons are reported only from L. McBride, 2 early in November (NH), and 3 on the Des Moines Res. on the seventh (DM). An adult Western Grebe with two young were noted on the Reservoir on 28 October, and 1 adult on 7 November (DM). There were five flights of 50-75 Pelicans each noted in late September (EG); 1 was at Easter Lake on 16-17 October (WC), with 4 at Red Rock on 2 October remaining through the month (GB). A few Cormorants were seen (NH,GB,WHB).

**Hérons.** Great Blues were down (NH). A very, very late Green Heron was seen at Lake Odessa on 26 November by Walter Dau (PP). Seven little Blue Herons lingered at Red Rock until 23 September (GB). The only Common Egrets: 1 on 2 September at Swan L. (NH), and on 24 October at Red Rock (GB).

**Swans, Geese, Ducks.** Three Whistling Swans at Hendrickson Slough near Marshalltown were shot on 4 November with two of the hunters apprehended. Aerial counts on 23 October showed 50 M Snows and Blues at De Soto Bend, and 2M at Red Rock with 300 Canadas (John Beamer, fide GB). "Immense flocks" of Blues and Snows were seen on 12 November (EG). Five White-fronted Geese were at Red Rock 21 September (GB). Duck migration was "miserable" (NH) and, aside from a large raft of Scaup on 17 October, relatively few have been seen near Des Moines. The aerial count mentioned showed 5 M Mallards, 1 M Scaup and Ring-necks, and a scattering of other species of ducks at Red Rock. Mallards "peaked" at 40 M, half of 1971 peak at Red Rock (GB). Wood Ducks reached a maximum of 1,000 on 12 October at Red Rock (GB).

**Hawks.** Turkey Vultures peaked at 225 at Red Rock (GB). Only one mention of Sharp-shinned, 8 banded (PP). A protracted migration of Broad-winged was noticed (NH), with about 25 seen in early October (RLS). S Swainson's in the dark phase was observed 11 November (RG). A Golden Eagle was seen over Shenandoah on 3 November (RZ). A Bald Eagle soaring over their home in Des Moines was watched through a scope on 28 October (S, JS). Mid October found 2 at Red Rock. No Marsh Hawks have been seen since spring (NH). There appeared more Ospreys than usual this fall (WHB) one at Red Rock 30 September into October (GB) and 2 were at Rathbun Lake for some time (RLS). Pigeon Hawks are seldom reported but descriptions of this falcon are given, at Cedar Falls on 27 September (MK) and Red Rock on 21 October (WC).

**Bobwhites, Pheasants, Turkeys, Rails, Shorebirds.** Bobwhites and Pheasants are plentiful (EG). In mid-October 6-8 Turkeys were seen in Lucas State Forest (RLS). Two Virginia Rails were shot at Big Marsh (MK). There were shorebirds reported in numbers from only one location, Shenandoah, where many appeared in September (RZ).

**Flycatchers.** Some late Phoebe's are reported; 1 on 4 November (NH), and 2 on 5 November (PP). Olive-sided Flycatchers seemed more numerous than last fall (NH).

**Nuthatches, Wrens.** Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared in late August (PP) and are reported from other areas (NH, LW, GB), hopefully reversing the situation last year. A House Wren on 25 October was very late (PP). Winter Wrens seem more numerous than usual with reports (NH, PP, FK).

**Thrashers, Kinglets, Pipits.** Brown Thrashers were seen as late as 7 November (NH) and 23 November (PP). There were early waves of Golden-crowned Kinglets on 31 August and 2 September and Ruby-crowned were likewise numerous (NH). Two Water Pipits were seen at Conesville on 12 and 14 October (NH).

**Vireos.** Red-eyed were very numerous during most of September (NH), while an extremely late one was well seen in Des Moines on 5 November (WHB). Philadelphias; 1 on 9 September (NH), and 3 banded (PP).

**Warblers.** The only wave mentioned was early in September (D, JB). Only 2 Orange-crowned were banded, one on the late date 1 November (PP). The Cape May, seldom reported in fall, was banded on an early date 30 August (PP). Two of the rare Black-throated Blue were banded, but only two of the common Yellow-throat (PP).

**Finches.** A late Dickcissel was banded at Shenandoah on 7 October (RZ). Evening Grosbeaks, scarce or missing last year, appeared on 17 October with a flock of 6 (FK). The first Des Moines report was of 1 on 12 November, building up to 6 on the 14th (MB), and a flock of 7 on the 16th (DM). This does not appear to be a Purple Finch year; first seen on 14 October (NH). Siskins are apparently not plentiful, reports mention a flock of 25 on the Iowa City campus since 17 October (NH), and a "rather large flock" in mid-October (EG). Red Crossbills appeared early with 12 on the campus on 26 October (NH), and other reports from Des Moines (LW), Cedar Rapids (Robt. Vane fide FK). No Tree Sparrows have been mentioned.

**Contributors:** Mrs. Gladys Black, Pleasantville and Red Rock; Mrs. Margaret Brooke, Des Moines; Dorothy and Joe Brown, Des Moines; Wm. Criswell, Des Moines and Red Rock; Mrs. Edw. Getscher, Hamburg; Dr. N. Halmi, Iowa City; Fred Kent, Iowa City; Merten Konig, Cedar Falls; Lawrence Lindemann, McGregor; Dick Mooney, Des Moines; Peter Petersen, Davenport; Mrs. R. L. Scott, Seymour; John and Steve Stewart, Des Moines; Mrs. Lurene Warters, Des Moines; Ruth Zollars, Shenandoah.

The success or failure of Field Reports depends entirely upon the cooperation of the membership, and the number of contributors has dwindled to the point where the continuation of this feature by me seems futile. For a number of years there was good coverage of most of the state and Field Reports will be continued only if the number of reports for inclusion in the March issue warrants. These should be in by 15 February. Woodward H. Brown, 432 Tonawanda Dr., Des Moines 50312

## GENERAL NOTES



**Whooping Crane in Clinton County** -- On October 31, 1972, Dr. George Aurand of Clinton saw an adult Whooping Crane about ten miles north of Clinton. Dr. Aurand, a new I. O. U. member, saw the bird circle over a pond on property which he and several other Clinton men are developing as a hunting area. He had been hunting earlier in the morning of October 31 but by eleven he was observing the many migrating sparrows feeding on the millet along the pond edge. He noticed a large white bird with black wingtips approaching from the south. Using 7 X 50 binoculars he discerned a red cheek patch as well as the long neck and long trailing legs. The bird circled north of the pond and returned with deliberate wingbeats to the direction from which it had come after flying almost directly over his head at a minimum range of forty yards. The bird was under observation for several minutes and the sky was overcast with a westerly wind. A strong frontal system had moved across Iowa several days prior to the observation and may have forced the bird eastward. He wrote the author and a phone call confirmed the observation. Dr. Aurand is very experienced with waterfowl and pelicans and never had any doubt regarding his identification. -- PETER C. PETERSEN, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport.

**Ground Nesting of a Yellow-shafted Flicker** -- Although the Yellow-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) is well known as a frequent ground feeder, few reports of other non-arboreal habits have been noted. On p. 165 of *Birds of America* by Pearson et al. there is a photograph of a clutch of eggs, reportedly a Flicker's, in a scrape nest on open ground. The picture legend mentions lack of suitable nest habitat which apparently was the reason for this unusual nesting. A. C. Bent reports ground nestings in his *Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers* U. S. National Museum Bulletin 1939, p. 270-72; but in Roberts' *Birds of Minnesota* and in Bailey and Niedrach's *Birds of Colorado* there is no mention of such an occurrence.

In June, 1972, a report was taken from Des Moines Audubon Society member, Ruth Dallinger Buckles, that she had encountered an unidentified clutch of white eggs on the bare ground of a neighbor's garden plot. In a subsequent call she identified the nest as that of a Yellow-shafted Flicker - the adult bird had been seen incubating. Observations were possible from a garage window about 35 feet from the nest side and identification was positive. The author was called in order that a pictorial record be obtained, and the accompanying pictures resulted from a brief afternoon visit on June 10th to this unlikely nest site.

The general area is an "open air" neighborhood in northwest Des Moines - deep lots, low housing density, a good habitat mix of fields, shrubby yards, and tree-lined streets. Abundance of mature trees would seem to rule out lack of suitable 'normal' nest sites for the flicker, and the choice of an unprotected open field for a nest site is inexplicable.

There were five eggs on the ground at the time of this photographic field trip - the female bird flushed without outcry and reappeared after about 15 minutes of semi-concealed observation by the author at a distance of around 25 feet.





The sequence of pictures records the adult female Flicker's hesitant and wary return to the nest and her resumption of incubation after first adjusting the position of the eggs (3rd picture). Note that she does not hop or walk, but makes typical woodpecker progress, here in a horizontal, not vertical, plane. Photos by author



The nest site (arrow) and surrounding area. The large trees nearby would appear to rule out lack of conventional nest sites as a reason for the ground nest. Closeup, right, shows the clutch of five eggs on June 10th; the 2½ inches wide key case. Indicates general scale. Photos by author.



Three days after the pictures were made the nest was evidently abandoned following a 2½ inch rainfall. The eggs were noted on the evening of June 14, but the adult wasn't seen nor has she been observed since, although the eggs remained until at least June 19th.

#### Acknowledgments

Mrs. Ruth Buckles furnished the initial report and provided facilities for photographing the bird at the nest. Mr. Woodward Brown volunteered a search of the literature for reports of similar occurrences. - JOSEPH K. BROWN, 3300 Lincoln Rd., Des Moines.

**An Unusual Observation of Caspian Terns.** -- On 24 September, 1972 at Lake Easter, near Des Moines, 4 Caspian Terns were sighted. One, an immature, differing in plumage from the others, sat on the shore waiting to be fed, and an adult came in many times and fed it fish. On one occasion, the fish was too large; the adult beat in on the ground then, flying low, held it under water. It then returned to land, tossed the fish about to position it and finally swallowed it. The young bird meantime sat quietly and did not beg to be fed. MARY ELIZABETH PECK, 3839 Cornell St., Des Moines.



Saw-whet Owl, Photo by F. W. Kent.

## BOOK REVIEWS



**Words for Birds: A Lexicon of North American Birds with Biographical Notes** - Edward S. Gruson -- Quadrangle Books, New York, New York -- 305p., 238 line drawings -- 1972. -- \$8.95.

Every wonder who Traill, Smith, McCown or Mac Gillivray were and why birds were named to honor them? If you have delved into the scientific names of birds you may have had questions regarding their origin. This book will answer these questions for North American birds in a very thorough manner. In the case of



reference to people a brief biographical sketch is included. Small line drawings from Alexander Wilson's work accompany the text and add to the generally effective layout.

Libraries would find this book particularly valuable as it provides an excellent reference source for information difficult to locate in previously extant literature. It is a reference book and should not be considered for casual reading except for perhaps the biographical sketches. ed.

**The Nightwatchers** -- Angus Cameron and Peter Parnall -- Four Winds Press, New York, New York -- 111p; many line drawings - 1972 -- \$8.95.

A collection of brief essays and well executed line drawings dealing with owls. Owls have held a strange fascination for man since primitive times. Angus Cameron, an editor by profession, has captured much of the essence of the intriguing habits of these remarkable birds. Peter Parnall, the artist, has provided the most unique contribution with his excellent drawings. One criticism is the high price, but books seem to be especially vulnerable to inflation. Those especially interested in owls should consider this offering but would be well advised to examine a copy first. ed.

**KEY TO NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL** -- Stephen R. Wylie, Stewart S. Furlong and Jack R. Schroeder -- Livingston Publishing Company, Wynnewood, Pa. -- 32p., 48 color illustrations -- 1972 -- "paperbound" -- \$3.95.

A field guide aimed at the hunting contingent featuring one interesting new feature. It is printed on extruded polyolefin, an opaque plastic, making it waterproof and washable. It illustrates all North American species although not following the A. O. U. checklist species names. The text supplies measurements, weight, field marks, food and habitat preferences plus symbols indicating abundance in each flyway. The faults are numerous -- the color illustrations depict spring plumage, not of optimum value to the hunter; several plates are inaccurate, especially in the proportionate size of the head; and the price, apparently dictated by the plastic pages, is quite high. Regarding the last point, one can purchase over a dozen Fish and Wildlife Service booklets on ducks for the same price as this booklet. Likewise, for the same price a birder can purchase a field guide covering all North American birds. While the Livingston Company is to be commended for an innovation, it is unfortunate that the contents do not live up to the materials used. ed.

**At a Bend in A Mexican River** -- George Miksch Sutton - Paul S. Ericksson, Inc., Publisher, New York, New York -- 184 p., 12 color plates, 18 black and white reproductions, 17 photographs -- 1972 -- \$14.95.

Another fine offering on some of Dr. Suttons field expeditions to Mexico including many beautifully reproduced watercolors. It is similar to *High Arctic*, an account of Suttons travels in the opposite direction, reviewed earlier (*I.B.L.*, Vol. 42 p. 53). It is not a dry narrative of scientific explorations but a very warm, sometimes rather anthropomorphic, work. The three trips discussed in this book took place in 1941, 1948-49 and 1951-52. Much of the area Sutton visited is no more, changed by what we usually call "progress". Sutton makes several poignant pleas for conservation and habitat preservation in Mexico.

The layout is well executed and utilizes space more economically than *High Arctic*. The black and white reproductions of paintings are of excellent quality. The author conveys a good feel for the tropics as well as the behavior, habits and characteristics of the bird life. The book is one that will be appreciated by anyone with a love of the out-of-doors. ed.

## Cornell Seminars in Ornithology

We offer nine seminars a college-level course in ornithology for a personal undertaking at home. Our intent is to give a broad view of bird biology, thus providing each student with a substantial background for the lasting enjoyment of birds. We have every hope that the course, by widening an appreciation of birds and demonstrating the significant role of birds in our natural environment, will win many cohorts in the worrisome struggle for the preservation of bird life. We further hope that students, upon completion of the course, will wish to undertake study projects on their own.

In order to bring together a body of authoritative information, we invited the collaboration of several scholars with special knowledge of certain aspects of ornithology. When extending the invitations, we urged each collaborator to (1) make his text more factual than theoretical while not neglecting to present concepts that may stir the student's imagination and interest; (2) take every opportunity to compare the bird's form, structure, physiology, action, behavior, etc. to the human being's, thereby giving the student a familiar basis for understanding; and (3) point out studies that the student can pursue by himself.

With the information provided by the collaborators, we prepared the seminars in a manner that is easily readable without sacrifice of scientific content. We kept technical terminology to an absolute minimum. When a technical term was necessary, we defined it immediately. And we purposely avoided referring to the original sources of information, believing that the names of authorities for certain facts and ideas would only intrude upon the discussion.

In preparing the seminars, we frequently used illustrations -- drawings and photographs -- with captions stressing certain points or enlarging upon the text. Indeed, we consider the illustrations and the captions as important as the text itself in presenting the subject matter clearly and in a way to be remembered.

Each collaborator, while applying his own special knowledge, drew much of his information from many published sources. Similarly, each artist in preparing the illustrations frequently relied upon published drawings and photographs. Therefore, we make no claim that the factual and theoretical substance of these seminars is original. We simply maintain that the substance conforms with the most recent views of ornithologists. For the selection of facts and ideas, together with their interpretation and final wording, the editor takes the full responsibility.

All nine seminars are looseleaf for inclusion in a notebook cover so that the student may insert additional pages for his own comments and observations and may include further information acquired from supplementary reading.

Each seminar is mailed to the student in a folder bearing the title of the subject and a table of contents.

Accompanying Seminars I through VIII is a set of objective questions pertaining to the subject matter. The student can find the correct answers by reviewing the text and illustrations. In many instances, he will find the answers in the illustrations. Therefore, he should carefully study them, including their captions.

Upon enrolling in the Home Study Course and paying fees for registration and the first seminar, the student will receive Seminar I, the questions on the subject matter in the seminar, and an order blank for Seminar II. As soon as he has studied Seminar I and answered the questions, he should sign the question sheet, fill out the order blank for Seminar II, and mail them together with the payment for



Seminar II to the Instructor, Home Study Course, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850.

Upon receiving the question sheet for Seminar I and the order and payment for Seminar II, the Instructor will correct the answers and return them to the student along with Seminar II, the questions for Seminar II, and an order blank for Seminar III.

The procedure after studying Seminar II will be the same for Seminars III, IV, V, VI and VII.

Following his study of Seminar VIII, and the return of the signed question sheet, the student will receive the corrected questions, Seminar IX without charge, and a certificate stating that he has completed the Home Study Course. Contact the editor of *Iowa Bird Life* if interested.

## Request for Information: Sanderling

For the past two years, the Long Point Bird Observatory has undertaken a study on the relationship between fat deposition and fall migration in the Sanderling. In conjunction with this study, a large number of birds have been colour-marked and sightings of these marked birds away from Long Point have indicated that most of the birds fly directly from the study area to the East Coast.

During 1972, the Observatory hopes to individually colour-mark and colour-code several hundred Sanderling in order to further investigate this phenomenon. The colour-coding will involve three aspects: colour-marking with feather dye, wing-tagging and banding with the normal aluminum band.

Birds will be feather-dyed on the breast and abdomen with one of four colours: red, yellow, green, or white (no colour); according to the percent of the bird's total body weight attributable to fat.

The birds will be wing-tagged on each wing with semi-permanent wing tags of the following colours: black, blue, brown, green, red, orange, yellow and white. The wing-tagging will individually identify each bird.

The placement of the aluminum band will indicate the age of the bird. Birds banded on the right leg will be adults and those banded on the left leg will be immatures.

The Observatory would be pleased if anyone sighting these birds would report the following information to us:

- Date of sighting
- Location (including nearest city or town)
- Colour of feather-dye on the breast and abdomen
- Colour of the wing tag on the right wing
- Colour of the wing tag on the left wing
- Leg on which the bird is banded

Co-operators will receive a short note explaining the project's application to the preservation of the Long Point peninsula in a natural state and the date on which the bird was last seen on Long Point. Reports of marked birds should be sent to:

Long Point Bird Observatory,  
Long Point, Ontario,  
CANADA.